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111010Z Mar 04

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 001867

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STATE FOR NEA/ARN, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, INR/NESA, R/MR,
I/GNEA, B/BXN, B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN
USAID/ANE/MEA
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH
PARIS FOR O'FRIEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR JO](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON IRAQ

Summary

-- Lead story in all papers today, March 10, focuses on the King's engagement on domestic issues, including chairing a cabinet meeting yesterday to follow through on government projects. Papers highlight Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher's activities in the United States and his meeting with Secretary Powell. All papers highlight the death by "natural causes" of Palestinian Abu Abbas in Iraq in U.S. custody.

Editorial Commentary

-- "A sectarian and separatist constitution for Iraq"

Daily columnist Fahd Fanek writes on the back page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (03/10): "If you want to know the aspects of democracy that America wants to promote in the Greater Middle East, then all you have to do is read the draft Iraqi constitution. The constitution is a big step backwards if compared to the previous constitution of Iraq. It is a call to stop and think when America comes in to replace a secular constitution with a constitution that states the official religion of the state and disregards emphasis on that state's Arabism.. The new constitution is no more than a project to accommodate sectarian and ethnic demands and American values. The result was to offend all. The project is not cause for pride for the Shiites, the Sunnis or the Kurds. It is a mark of shame for America, the sponsor of this constitution.. America is not supporting democracy. It is rather supporting the disintegration and the reshaping of the region in a manner that would best serve its imperial project and the security of Israel."

-- "Law of administration for the state of Iraq: a step to legitimize occupation"

Daily columnist Yaser Za'atreh writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (03/10): "A shallow reading of the Law [the temporary Iraqi constitution] shows that Iraq is on its way to becoming a democratic state, packed with freedoms, human rights and women's role. Yet, the situation indicates otherwise. The core issue of the Law in Bremer's mind and his supporters in Washington is to legitimize the occupation through the interim government. This is going to push America to entrench itself in fortified bases that would cut back its losses in a big way, while its colonialist presence and its control over the domestic situation remains. The situation is this: whoever has the reins of security, intelligence and the army will be the one to control issues in Iraq, and these three aspects will be administered by American hands.. This is how Bremer is thinking, but it can only succeed if the Iraqi fabric is continuously torn and battered in line with a policy of 'divide and conquer'.. The continuation of the resistance is the only guarantee that this would not happen, because it will pressure the occupiers and those who deal with them, as well as those who facilitate the task of [America's] mandate of Iraq. That is why the resistance is the most important thing under all circumstances."

-- "The key word is interim"

Centrist, influential among the elite English daily Jordan Times (03/10) editorializes: "Criticism of the interim organic legislation came not only from within Iraq but also from outside! The very strength of the temporary constitution may rest on the fact that it did not satisfy everybody. In the final analysis, the legislation was a compromise between various

conflicting aspirations. Probably the reason all sides finally accepted it was because it is temporary and not the final constitution on the basis of which the country will be governed.. This means that the real battle over the terms of a permanent Iraqi constitution lies ahead and it will be much more difficult than the one that has already been won. Yet we must congratulate the Iraqi Governing Council for succeeding in stitching together a piece of legislation that could serve as a basis for the permanent organic law of the country. No matter what one may think of the interim constitution, it remains infinitely more democratic than the old constitution which had never been approved and adopted by democratic means."

HALE